



Relationship between Music preference, Personality and Self-esteem among College Students

¹Hazqah Riyaz,

Master's in Arts, Clinical Psychology, Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied Sciences,
Noida,

hazqahriyaz@gmail.com

²Dr Vibha Yadava,

Assistant Professor-I, Amity Institute of Applied Science, Noida, India

vyadava@amity.edu

Abstract

Throughout history, people have used music to express their inner feelings, whether they are happy or sad. This connection becomes even more intriguing when examined in the context of personality traits because a person's musical preferences often reflect their individual temperament and character. Furthermore, as music may be a useful instrument for identity development, emotional wellness, and empowerment, its impact on self-esteem raises the dynamic link even

further. The aim of this paper was to see the relationship between Music preference, Personality and self-esteem among students. A convenient sample of 134 individuals was used in this study who were between the ages of 18 and 25, the participants were college students from Delhi and Delhi NCR. Pearson's correlation analysis was done to determine the relationship between Music preference, personality traits and self-esteem among students. Data collected from a sample of college students revealed mixed results. While, no significant correlation was found between extraversion and energetic rhythmic music, a negative correlation emerged between agreeableness and intense rebellious music. No significant association was observed between consciousness and intense rebellious music. However, a significant positive correlation was found between neuroticism and reflective complex music, as well as between openness to experience and upbeat conventional music, supporting the corresponding hypotheses. Furthermore, the study uncovered a significant positive relationship between self-esteem. These findings provide valuable insights into the nuanced interplay between personality traits, music preferences, and self-esteem among young adults, offering implications for understanding the psychological dynamics underlying music consumption and its impact on individual well-being.

Keywords: *Music Preference, Personality, Self-esteem, identity development*

Introduction

Music has always been a part of our life and has been utilized as a communication tool and emotional expression tool by people all over the world. Varied people have varied tastes in music, which also leads to different viewpoints. In particular, the younger generation of recent times has experienced a significant deal of impact from music, whether it be for leisure, travel, or business.

Given the profound influence that music has had on the current generation, it is crucial to investigate the relationship between music and personality and self-esteem. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between music preference, personality, and self-esteem among college students enrolled in Delhi and Delhi-NCR colleges. The students listen to music every day whether completing homework, cleaning their rooms, or travelling to and from campus.

People's taste in music has been shown in several studies to be influenced by their personality, mood, and culture; therefore, more research in this field is crucial to understanding the relationship between these factors. Less research has been done on the relationship between personality, self-esteem, and music preference, particularly in India, a country with a rich cultural heritage and a strong musical tradition. Thus, this study plays an important role to see if today's music influences the people in anyway.

Music

Music is a kind of artistic and cultural expression that conveys ideas, which evokes feelings, and creates aesthetic experiences via the use of structured sound elements including melody, harmony, rhythm, and timbre. It is a long-standing, essential component of human culture that has been present in many different civilizations. A wide variety of genres and styles exist for music, including pop, rock, hip-hop, electronic, jazz, folk, and classical music. It combines electronics, vocals, and a variety of instruments. Due to its ability to facilitate self-expression, communication, and entertainment, music is also significant in cultural, social, and emotional contexts (Rentfrow & Gosling, 2003).

Khalida et al. (2017) looked at the connection between personality types and music preferences. The study attempted to study the relationship between personality types and musical tastes. A sample of (n = 70, respondents ages 18 to 35) was collected from Karachi's universities. Pearson product moment correlation was utilized to ascertain the relationship between these two variables. The researchers found that extroverts and energetic and rhythmic people have a beneficial interaction. It proves that because they are gregarious, assertive, energetic, and outspoken, extroverts enjoy listening to upbeat and rhythmic music. Upbeat, mainstream music has a negative correlation with agreeableness. Neuroticism correlates positively with reflective and complicated music. Neurotic people are uneasy, gloomy, concerned, and apprehensive; thus, they prefer to listen to slow, sorrowful music. Karachi students who are open to experience picked Upbeat & Conventional and Reflective & Complex music because they want to try new things.

Personality

The dynamic arrangement of the psychophysical systems that define a person's distinctive behaviour and mental patterns is known as their personality (Allport, 1961). It refers to the distinct set of permanent behavioral and cognitive traits, patterns, and features that define people apart. It describes how people think, feel, and behave in a variety of contexts and over time.

The Big Five Traits

Personality traits are seen through the big five personality traits, which include the following:

Openness to Experience: Individuals having this personality trait are more open-minded, and curious about different things, they tend to take part in new things and explore the world. These people are very creative as well as imaginative who indulge in different activities people

low on this personality trait tend to restrict themselves in a particular routine and do not indulge in trying in different things, they rather prefer familiarity (Daniel & Lawrence, 2019).

Conscientiousness: It refers to the degree of organized and responsible a person is. Individual having this trait tend to be responsible, and goal-oriented. They are more organized in term of thoughts and actions. Individuals low on this trait are more spontaneous people who don't focus on the long-term goal and are less organized. People that are conscientious are very disciplined, accountable, and well-organized.

Extraversion: An individual high on this trait is outgoing, like to talk to people and be in big gatherings. They are very energetic people who derives their energy from socializing. Individual low on this trait are introverted, meaning they are very reserved people who don't like socializing much. They are very quiet and reflective people. The degree to which people seek out social contacts and get energy from being with others is referred to as extraversion.

Agreeableness: High on this trait means the person is very corporative and does various pro-social behaviour. They are very empathic and friendly people. Low on this trait, people tend to be manipulative. They are more competitive as well as assertive. Warmth, empathy, and a cooperative disposition are traits of agreeable people. They respect peaceful relationships and show consideration for the thoughts and feelings of others (Daniel & Lawrence, 2019).

Neuroticism: This personality trait is associated with emotional stability, individuals having this trait are anxious and can be moody. They are more sensitive to stress and are emotional beings. Low on this trait means the individual is more emotionally stable and can manage stress well, they are calmer and more resilient.

Personality and Music

A person's personality is shaped by their thoughts, emotions, and perceptions of the world. Since music has shaped our culture and identity in many ways, it also has an impact on our personalities. Everything that a person does, feels, or perceives reveals something about their personality. When someone has been exposed to a particular musical genre on a regular basis, it can greatly impact who they are and the kinds of things they may enjoy. People use music to express themselves and to identify with themselves. According to previous research, personality qualities influence an individual's choice of physical stimuli that align with their traits. Dispositions like Extroverts enjoy music with strong rhythms, dissonant harmonies, and a quick speed to boost their arousal (Khalida & Rasheed, 2017).

A study on the dimensions of music preferences and personality traits among university students was carried out by Summaira Naz et al. (2021). It looked at the relationship between student reference dimensions and personality qualities in a sample of 250 students between the ages of 20 and 25. The results showed that agreeableness, extraversion, and openness to new experiences were positively correlated with intense and rebellious music, cheerful and traditional music, and thoughtful and intellectual music. Conversely, there was a negative correlation found between extraversion and openness to new experiences and lively and rhythmic music. Additionally, a negative link was discovered between agreeableness and intense and rebellious music, and between neuroticism and thoughtful and complex music. Though it showed a favorable link with dynamic and rhythmic music, conscientiousness had a negative relationship with thoughtful and complicated, intense and rebellious, and cheery and conventional.

Alexandra et al. (2020) investigated the association between music tastes and personality in a sample of young Germans (N = 422, age range 21–26 years). According to the findings, those

who are open to new experiences like introspective and complicated music (e.g., classical) and intense and rebellious music (e.g., rock), whereas they reject peppy and conventional music. Extraverts, on the other hand, love peppy, traditional, energetic, and rhythmic music (for example, rap/hip-hop). Neuroticism has a minimal correlation with cheery and traditional.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem refers to an individual's overall opinion or appraisal of oneself. It refers to a person's thoughts, sentiments, and attitudes towards their own worth and talents. It has a significant impact on how people approach and manage numerous parts of life. Self-esteem is a multidimensional notion that describes how people perceive and value themselves (Rosenberg, 1965). It is influenced by both internal and external influences, including as personal beliefs, experiences, social connections, and achievements.

Daniel et al. (2015) did a study on Music Preference, Social Identity, and Self-Esteem. The goal of the study was to investigate the relationship between music preference and self-esteem, as well as to apply social identity theory to disparities in music preferences and self-esteem. There were 199 university students from New Zealand that took part. There were 199 students in the sample; 157 females and 42 males. A simple correlation analysis was used to investigate the relationships between the four STOMP music variables and the RSES. The findings revealed that males had a negative link with Reflective/Complex music, whereas females had negative relationships with both Energetic/Rhythmic and Upbeat/Conventional music. A substantial correlation was seen between self-esteem and music preference scores for groups of related genres. Additionally, there was a substantial correlation found between certain measures of group

distinction based on music taste and self-esteem; however, the correlation varied according on gender.

Music and Self-esteem

The relationship between music and self-esteem is complex and differs from person to person. Music has the ability to alter emotions, mood, and self-perception, ultimately affecting a person's self-esteem.

The connection between music and self-esteem explores how musical experiences influence feelings of self-worth and well-being. Music's emotional richness shapes mood, identity, and social connections, empowering personal growth. Through uplifting themes, communal experiences, and emotional catharsis, music deeply impacts self-perception and life experiences, offering insights into emotional and psychological aspects of life.

Identity and self-esteem in the context of music and music therapy: a review was conducted by Rafał et al. (2017). To determine the relationship between music therapy procedures, identity, and particular individual identity characteristics like self-esteem, this article will analyze the empirical research that is currently available. Additionally, it looks for connections between general music education and therapies meant to improve identity and self-worth and self-regulatory behaviour. A qualitative investigation revealed that one strategy to give one's damaged Self healthy qualities of personality and boost one's self-esteem is through expressing emotion and having a sense of agency, which is valued by the client and those around them. This review sheds light on how certain types of music activities affect psychological processes that define self-knowledge (music identity) and self-esteem, two outcomes of music therapy.

Rationale

Exploring the link between students' music preferences, personality traits, and self-esteem has far-reaching implications for psychology, education, and socio-cultural studies. Music has historically served as a conduit for emotional expression, and its impact on individuals' psychological and physiological well-being is significant. Understanding how music aligns with personality traits and self-esteem can inform the development of interventions promoting emotional health in various settings, from community centers to medical facilities. Personality traits, particularly the Big Five traits, heavily influence musical preferences, offering insights into the psychological processes underlying music choice. Self-esteem, crucial for mental well-being, is deeply intertwined with music preferences, especially during formative college years. Recognizing music's influence, educators can leverage music-based interventions to create inclusive learning environments that cater to diverse student needs. Additionally, the study's findings can inform the development of evidence-based music therapies for identity building, stress reduction, and emotional regulation, contributing to the growing field of music therapy. Ultimately, the dynamic interaction among music, personality, and self-esteem profoundly shapes individuals' psychological states and emotional health.

Methodology

Aim

To examine the relationship between music preferences, personality types and self esteem

Hypothesis

- H1: There will be a positive correlation between Extraversion scores and a preference for Energetic and Rhythmic music.
- H2: There will be a negative correlation between Agreeableness scores and a liking for Intense & Rebellious
- H3: There will be a negative correlation between Conscientiousness scores and a preference for Intense and Rebellious music.
- H4: There will be a positive correlation between Neuroticism scores and Reflective and Complex music.
- H5: Openness to experience scores will be positively correlated with a liking for Upbeat and Conventional music.
- H6: There will be a positive relationship between music preference and self-esteem.

Sampling:

A convenient sample consisting of 133 individuals was gathered. They were between the ages of 18 and 25. There were in total 68 females and 67 males in this study. Each participant was a college student from Delhi and the Delhi National Capital Region.

Measures

Short Test of Music Preferences (STOMP): Gosling and Rentfrow (2003) developed the Short Test of Music Preferences (STOMP). It enables scholars to assess their musical tastes. Four

categories were used to categories the fourteen different music genres: intense and rebellious, upbeat, and conventional, energetic and rhythmic, and complex and reflective. There are seven points on this Likert scale, where 1 means not at all and 7 means a great deal. The test-retest reliability of the measure ranges from 0.77 to 0.82. Because the components of the STOMP align with important characteristics of musical preferences, the measure has proven to have construct validity.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES): It is a widely used psychological tool for measuring self-esteem, which is defined as one's overall appraisal and image of oneself. It was developed in 1965 by Morris Rosenberg. The questionnaire consists of ten statements that describe one's feelings. Respondents rate how much they agree or disagree with each item on a four-point scale. Both positive and negative aspects of one's self-perception are addressed in the statements. The RSES's internal consistency vary from 0.70 to 0.90. Construct validity is the measure of how well a scale captures the intended theoretical construct. Numerous studies that show the RSES's predicted association with other self-esteem measures have strengthened the construct validity of the measure.

Big Five Inventory (BFI): John and Srivastava developed the Big Five Inventory (BFI) in 1999. It consists of 44 items measuring five different aspects of personality. Extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, emotional stability, and openness to new experiences are all scored on a five-point scale, with 1 denoting strong disagreement and 5 denoting great agreement. There is a 0.88 reliability coefficient.

Procedure

The data collection process for the study involved both offline and online methods. For online data collection, the questionnaire was transformed into Google Forms, which were then distributed. Participants who were willing to take part in the study were required to provide informed consent before proceeding. The participants were briefed about the purpose of the study and were assured that their responses would be kept confidential. Following this, instructions for completing the questionnaire were provided to the participants. After completing the questionnaire, participants were thanked for their participation, acknowledging their contribution to the study.

Results**Table 1***Descriptive*

Descriptive	Personality	Music	Self Esteem
N	133	133	133
Mean	148	67.4	22.5
Median	148	67	23

Standard Deviation	12.4	10.4	4.98
---------------------------	------	------	------

The mean score for personality among the participants is 148 (SD=12.4), this suggests that, a moderate level of variability in scores among the participants. The mean score for music preference is 67.4 (SD=10.4), this indicates a moderate level of variability in music preferences across the sample. Participants reported an average self-esteem score of 22.5 (SD=4.98), This suggests that, on average, participants had a relatively moderate level of self-esteem, with a relatively low level of variability in self-esteem scores among the sample.

Table 2

Pearson's correlation between Music and Personality

	Extraver sion	Agreeable ness	Conscientious ness	Neurotici sm	Openn ess	Reflecti ve & Comple x	Intense & Rebellio us	Upbeat & Conventio nal	Energet ic & Rhythmic
Extraversion									.
Agreeableness	.09								
Conscientiousness	.13	.44**							
Neuroticism	-.35**	-.00	-.22**						
Openness	.10	.15	.14	.03					
Reflective & Complex	.01	.09	.04	.21*	.23**				.

Intense & Rebellious	.11	-.22**	-.05	-.10	.14	.21*		.	.
Upbeat & Conventional	.05	.08	.04	.12	.20*	.52**	.36**		
Energetic & Rhythmic	.15	-.02	.12	-.07	.10	.27**	.37**	.40**	
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).									
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).									

The Pearson correlation coefficient revealed a significant Negative correlation between Agreeableness and Intense and Rebellious, ($r = -0.22$, $p < .01$), indicating a moderate to strong positive association. A significant Positive correlation between Neuroticism and Reflective & Complex, ($r = 0.21$, $p < .05$), indicating a moderate to strong positive association and a significant Positive correlation between Openness and Upbeat & Conventional, ($r = 0.20$, $p < .05$), indicating a moderate to strong positive association

Table 3

Pearson's correlation between Music and Self Esteem

	SELFESTEEM
MUSIC	.78**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson correlation coefficient revealed a significant positive correlation between Music and self-esteem, ($r = 0.78$, $p < .01$), indicating a moderate to strong positive association.

Discussion of Results

This study investigates the relationship among college students in Delhi and Delhi-NCR between music preferences, personality types, and self-esteem. It looks into how the younger generation's travel, work, and leisure schedules are impacted by music; a means for worldwide communication and emotional expression. Understanding this relationship is vital, given music's profound influence on today's youth.

The hypothesized positive correlation between Extraversion scores and a preference for Energetic and Rhythmic music was not supported by Pearson's correlation. This discrepancy may stem from various factors influencing musical preferences, such as environmental circumstances, emotional states, and personality qualities. Further investigation with larger and more diverse sample sizes is needed to explore potential moderating factors. Studies like Rentfrow and Gosling (2003) suggest a complex relationship between personality traits like extraversion and musical preferences, influenced by cultural background, personal experiences, and emotional associations. Musical tastes can vary widely, even among individuals with similar levels of extraversion, indicating that factors beyond personality may shape preferences for specific genres.

The second hypothesis was that there will be a negative correlation between Agreeableness scores and a liking for Intense and Rebellious music was supported by Pearson's correlation, indicating a significant negative relationship. Agreeableness traits, such as harmony-seeking, empathy, and conformity to social norms, may contribute to this correlation. Conversely, intense and rebellious music often reflects characteristics associated with risk-taking and defiance of societal norms, which may conflict with agreeable personality traits. Studies, like Delsing et al. (2008), suggest that individuals high in agreeableness are less likely to favor music genres linked to rebellion and non-conformity.

The third hypothesis was that there will be a negative correlation between Conscientiousness scores and a preference for Intense and Rebellious music was not supported by the findings, as no significant correlation was found. Conscientiousness traits, such as responsibility and self-control, may lead individuals to prefer structured and disciplined environments, potentially favoring music genres like classical or easy listening. Conversely, those who enjoy intense and rebellious music may exhibit lower levels of conscientiousness, as they may be more open to unconventional experiences. Rentfrow and Gosling (2003) similarly found no significant correlation between conscientiousness and preferences for passionate or rebellious music genres, highlighting the complexity of the relationship between personality traits and music preferences.

The fourth hypothesis was that there will be a positive correlation between Neuroticism scores and Reflective and Complex music was supported by the findings. Neurotic individuals, characterized by traits like anxiety and emotional instability, often seek solace in introspective and emotionally charged music. Reflective and complex music provides an outlet for neurotic individuals to explore and process their feelings, resonating with their inner turmoil and emotional experiences. Studies, such as Chamorro-Premuzic and Furnham (2007), also suggest that neurotic individuals favor emotionally and cognitively challenging music, finding comfort in music that mirrors their inner struggles.

The fifth hypothesis suggesting a positive correlation between Openness to Experience scores and a preference for Upbeat and Conventional music was supported. Individuals high in Openness to Experience tend to be more receptive to new experiences, including various music genres. Upbeat and Conventional music often represents popular and mainstream genres that are widely accessible and enjoyed. Studies, like Rentfrow and Gosling (2003), indicate that those with

high Openness to Experience typically enjoy a diverse range of musical styles, including lively and traditional ones. Open-minded individuals often have a greater appreciation for the arts and find the melodic and rhythmic aspects of Upbeat and Conventional music appealing.

The sixth hypothesis proposed a positive relationship between music preference and self-esteem, which was supported by the findings. Music has a profound impact on emotions and mood, often used by individuals to uplift their spirits and regulate their feelings. When people resonate with music that aligns with their interests and values, it can enhance their sense of identity and self-worth, thereby boosting self-esteem. Studies, like Krause et al. (2019), have demonstrated that individuals with higher self-esteem tend to prefer music associated with positive emotions and personal growth. Additionally, there's a positive correlation between self-esteem and using music for mood enhancement.

Conclusion

This study examined the correlation between music preference, personality traits, and self-esteem among Indian students. It found partial support for the hypotheses, with significant correlations observed between certain personality traits and music preferences. Specifically, agreeableness showed a negative correlation with intense and rebellious music, while neuroticism correlated positively with reflective and complex music. Openness to experience correlated positively with upbeat and conventional music. Additionally, a positive relationship was found between self-esteem and music preference, suggesting that higher self-esteem is associated with more positive attitudes toward music preferences. These findings shed light on how personality

traits influence music preferences and their impact on psychological well-being among young adults.

Limitations

The study's cross-sectional design prevents establishing causal relationships between variables, necessitating longitudinal or experimental approaches for deeper insights. Additionally, self-report measures may introduce response bias and social desirability effects, potentially affecting data accuracy. Furthermore, limited generalizability due to small sample sizes and potential selection biases urges larger and more diverse samples for robust findings.

Future Implications

Further research should explore underlying mechanisms in the relationships between self-esteem, musical preferences, and personality traits, potentially through mediation or moderation analyses. Moreover, personalized music recommendation systems could benefit from integrating personality assessments for tailored suggestions. Additionally, targeted interventions, such as psychological therapies or music-based treatments, could be developed based on individuals' personality traits and music preferences to improve mental health outcomes.

Educational settings could leverage music to enhance student engagement and cognitive growth, especially by aligning music choices with students' openness to new experiences. Lastly, exploring the therapeutic potential of music for boosting self-esteem and well-being, especially in vulnerable populations, warrants further investigation and tailored interventions.

References

- Alexandra, L, Rudan, A, Tarnai, C. (2020). Association between music tastes and personality in young Germans. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 44(2), 123-135.
- Boer, D., Fischer, R., Tekman, H. G., Abubakar, A., Njenga, J., & Zenger, M. (2012). Young people's topography of musical functions: Personal, social and cultural experiences with music across genders and six societies. *International Journal of Psychology*, 47(5), 355–369.
- Burt, S. A., & Donnellan, M. B. (2009). Development and validation of the Subtypes of Antisocial Behavior Questionnaire. *Aggressive Behavior*, 35(5), 376-398.
- Chamorro-Premuzic, T., & Furnham, A. (2007). Personality and music: Can traits explain how people use music in everyday life? *British Journal of Psychology*, 98(2), 175–185.
- Delsing, M. J., Ter Bogt, T. F., Engels, R. C., & Meeus, W. H. (2008). Adolescents' music preferences and personality characteristics. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 37(3), 273–283.
- John, O. P., & Srivastava, S. (1999). The Big-Five trait taxonomy: History, measurement, and theoretical perspectives. In L. A. Pervin & O. P. John (Eds.), *Handbook of personality: Theory and research* (Vol. 2, pp. 102–138). New York: Guilford Press.
- Khalida, R., Rasheed, S. (2017). Relationship between music preferences and personality types: A study from Karachi's universities. *Journal of Music Research*, 45(3), 221-234
- Krause, A. E., North, A. C., & Davidson, J. W. (2019). Using self-esteem to predict music preference and its relationship with well-being: A cross-cultural investigation. *Psychology of Music*, 47(1), 60–78.
- Langmeyer, A., Guglhör-Rudan, A., Tarnai, C (2012). What do Music Preferences reveal about

personality? A Cross- Cultural replication using self-ratings and ratings of music samples.

Journal of Individual Differences, 33(2), 119-130

Lawendowski, R., & Bieleninik, Ł. (2017). Identity and self-esteem in the context of music and music therapy: A review. *Health Psychology Report*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.5114/hpr.2017.64785>

Naz, S., Kamal, A., Khan, M. J., Bibi, H. (2021). Dimensions of music preferences and personality traits among university students. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 89, 104088. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2021.104088>

Rentfrow, P. J., & Gosling, S. D. (2003). The do re mi's of everyday life: The structure and personality correlates of music preferences. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(6), 1236–1256.

Rentfrow, P.J., Goldberg, & Levitin, D.J, (2011). The Structure of musical preferences: A Five-factor model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 100(6), 1139-1157

Rentfrow, P. J., & McDonald, J. A. (2019). Personality and music: A review and investigation of the Big Five. *Psychology of Music*, 47(3), 354–378.

Rosenberg, M. (1965). Society and the adolescent self-image. *Princeton University Press*.